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# 硕士学位论文

Conference Interpreters on the Air

——An Inquiry into the Live TV Interpreting

电视直播的译者——电视口译评析

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## Abstract

Simultaneous interpreting for TV is a relatively new phenomenon in China, while interpreting schools do not provide any specific training to this day, so that practitioners working for the media have to find their bearings on their haphazard and isolated own. With more and more frequent international TV communication, the time has surely come to fill this gap. Therefore, a study of the working mechanism and norms of TV interpreting could shed some light on the ongoing and future research in China.

This paper aims to delve into the unique nature of TV interpreting and seeks for the strategies to cope with this demanding job. The author first gives out the definition, categories and working mechanism of TV interpreting. And then the author elaborates on the characteristics and the quality standards of TV interpreting. What's more, the paper is expected to drop a few hints on how to achieve successful TV interpreting at last. The author summarizes the important points when preparing for the task and gives out some suggestions on the training mode of TV interpreters. It is hoped that this paper will present a general picture of TV interpreting and arouse practitioners and researchers' interest to make in-depth research in this field.

**Key Words:** TV interpreting; live broadcasting; television communication

## 摘 要

电视口译在中国是一个新兴的现象，然而目前国内的翻译学校却没有任何针对这个特殊岗位的培训项目，所以很多为媒体工作的译者只能靠自己单薄的力量来应对这个难题。电视口译发展速度之快，要求相应的理论及人才培养机制也随之向前发展。

本文旨在探究电视口译的本质以及寻求应对的策略。作者首先给出电视口译的定义，分类及工作机制。接着作者具体分析电视口译的特点和质量标准。最后，作者总结了如何成功完成电视口译任务的要素，包括技术设备，译前准备和人才培养机制等。作者希望通过本文能描述出电视口译的全貌，引起国内更多学者的注意，从而进一步参与到这个领域的研究工作中来。

**关键词：**电视口译；现场直播；电视交流

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## Introduction

At 10:00 a.m. (Beijing Time), March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2003, the USA launched its air attack on Iraq and the war broke out. At the same time, six simultaneous interpreters participated in the live broadcasting of the Special Report of the Iraq War of CCTV-4. Their stable, exact and fluent interpretation has impressed the Chinese audiences greatly. The debut of the simultaneous interpreters on CCTV enabled the general public for the first time to get the first-hand news stories about the ongoing war. With the upgrading of modern technology and the development of the mass media, we can easily get the news worldwide almost simultaneously with the help of satellite, while language becomes the major barrier in terms of information transmission across national borders. A lot of TV stations now employ interpreting to overcome the problem, in addition to the traditional modes---subtitling, voice-over or dubbing. Therefore, a totally new type of work mechanism comes into being---TV interpreting.

TV interpreting, especially simultaneous TV interpreting is the product of China's gradual integration into the whole world. The TV audiences of China not only want to know what happened in the world, but also want to know what is happening in the world. That is to say, we need to get the breaking news as soon as possible. The leaders of CCTV-4 bravely and insightfully used simultaneous interpreters in the 48 hours' Special Report of Iraq War. It was pioneering in the history of China's TV screen as well as in the interpreting field. In the following four days, the viewing rate reached 6.06%, 28 times of the normal level. The highest viewing rate once hit 7.92%. (王今一, 2004) The success brings great confidence to the CCTV. They adopted simultaneous interpreting in more and more live broadcasting programs. The feedback from the audiences varies greatly, which is out of their expectation, for example, CCTV-6, the movie channel, broadcast in 2005 the grand ceremony of the 78<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards with only one-hour delay, using simultaneous interpreting. Unfortunately, they

encountered slavish criticisms from the audience. As a result, for the 79<sup>th</sup> Oscar, they went back to seek for the traditional but safe way of broadcasting, subtitling and dubbing. It is quite interesting that the same mode of language transfer on TV received totally different evaluations.

CCTV tries to use simultaneous interpreting together with the live TV pictures when it broadcasts big international events. The intention is good, but have they taken into consideration the quality of interpreting and the perception of TV audience? Simultaneous interpreting is indeed the most timely and efficient way to remove the language barrier, but are the interpreters able to provide exact and complete information? How effective is TV interpreting? Would the audience accept it as the most desirable way of getting informed? Compared with other types of translation mode (dubbing, voice-over and subtitling), has simultaneous interpreting deepened the audience's interest in watching international news? All these questions need thorough exploration and research. In the following chapters, I will delve into the unique nature of TV interpreting and hope to explain the interactional relationship between the media and interpreting.

Excluding the introduction and conclusion, the paper is made up of four chapters.

Chapter 1 describes the operational framework of live TV interpreting and its current situation in China and abroad. The author first gives out the definition of TV interpreting as well as its categories. And then she highlights the peculiar difficulties of TV interpreting, that is, the TV interpreter has to be in a position to tackle any subject and any speaker, any dialect, any sociolect and any idiolect, at any time. At last, the general picture is compared to the common practice in China.

Chapter 2 delves into the nature of interpreter-mediated communication on TV, using Hymes's model to conduct a detailed comparative analysis of TV interpreting and conference interpreting.

Chapter 3 tries to explain how media ideologies affect the traditional norms of interpreters and to summarize the specific expectations and criteria for quality TV

interpreting. The author lists seven factors and studies them carefully to conclude that the force of TV ideology has a strong impact on TV interpreters who can no longer feel comfortable in their traditional habitus, and are no longer being valued according to current accepted interpreting norms.

Chapter 4 analyzes the important factors for achieving successful TV interpreting, including its preparation and training mechanism according to the specific requirements of TV interpreting.

## **Chapter 1 Interpreting Live for TV: Operational Framework and Current Situation**

### **1. International Television Communication and Language Transfer**

Globalization, in many ways a cliché, does have some pretty direct implications for us all, as modern information and communication technology is changing a large part of our daily lives. At the same time, communication itself has become a product in the international market place. For these two reasons, language practices---and, most of all, those related language transfer---are gaining importance these years and increasingly affect the circulation of knowledge, the development of cultural identities, etc. We see it in the mass media, in business, wherever people work and interact. Yet, three main characteristics of mass communication still hold true: mass communication is a typical feature of industrial societies, it uses channels which can reach non-predefined groups of recipients with different social backgrounds, and it consists of messages made by producer groups using industrial production facilities.

In the field of television, the use of satellite transmission and cabled TV, along with the decline of public broadcasting monopolies has led to a high differentiation of programs and to a marked growth both in the national demand for and in the international exchange of TV productions. Exchanges of TV programs across linguistic borders require some kind of localization in order to convey foreign language messages to local audiences; this can be carried out in different modes by people with different professional profiles, such as subtitling, dubbing and live interpreting, with the last being the focus of this paper and also a relatively new phenomenon in the field of TV and interpreting.

### **2. What is TV Interpreting**

Interpreting (sometimes called live voice-over) is increasingly used as a language



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